

Evaluating the Conversation After the Ryan White Exhibit: A Systematic Examination of Research and Evaluation Methodologies

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My project is an exploration of methodologies for assessing visitor response to a museum exhibition centered on socially charged issues. My hypothesis is twofold: (a) family conversations continue after visitors leave a socially charged museum exhibit; (b) by analyzing these conversations, meaningful trends can be identified. I seek to establish a rigorous methodology for testing my hypothesis that can then be applied to the evaluation of similar socially charged museum exhibits.

For my project, I structured a methodology that outlines the procedures for evaluating conversations that parents have with their children after they leave the Ryan White exhibit at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis. The Ryan White exhibit raises awareness for issues such as HIV/AIDS, a difficult subject for many parents to discuss with their children.

My project will begin with an evaluation design, which includes my project hypotheses, a brief project description, objectives, methods, and a timeline. I will reach out to the community via web postings and phone calls to find 6 subjects who fit my specified criteria: (a) Parents born between 1970 and 1980 (i.e. the same sociological generation as Ryan White); (b) parents must have one or more children ages 6-14. The sampling of participants will be completed on a voluntary basis. Before beginning the interviews, I will then complete training for the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), for the purpose of protecting the participants of my study. I will conduct 6, thirty minute, semi-structured interviews with my participants and analyze the results.

This project will establish a foundation upon which a further research can be conducted on this subject. My finished product will exemplify the methodologies of evaluation for a socially charged museum exhibit, and will help scholars of Visitors Studies understand the complete dialogue of exhibits.